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ICM Reflections – Preparing the Table

This will be my last “shot” at sharing some of my experiences gathered while traveling in your midst and representing you at various functions. I begin by joining you in a profound sense of celebration for the selection of the Rev. June Boutwell to begin ministry here in SECUCC effective February 24, 2014. I have known June for a long time, and from the very beginning I was pleased at the news that she was a candidate. Now that the delegates at the Conference Special meeting have affirmed that choice, I will turn my attention to wrapping up those matters still needing my attention and to “preparing the table” to enable June to get a running start – just the kind of start she will need to keep up with all that lies ahead for this coming spring! I will finish my service among you on February 23, participating in the ordination service of Kim Sorrells, to be held at Central Congregational UCC in Atlanta. Karen and I will depart soon after that and return to Montana...cherishing numerous fond memories of our time here in the south and full of gratitude for the hospitality you have shown us!



But first, my final report on a visit to one of our congregations, Pilgrimage UCC in Marietta, where I uncovered several notable facts:

- I have visited hundreds of UCC congregations over the past twenty years, and Pilgrimage “wins the prize” for effective use of UCC signs and banners – used in a manner that invites people to come in and experience a place where all are welcome and where “God Is Still Speaking!”

- Kimberleigh Buchanan, Senior Pastor, and her husband, Allen Mullinax, Director of Music have plans for an exciting trip to Ireland this summer (late August, early September). This trip will be part of Kim's planned summer sabbatical, and this portion of that sabbatical speaks to Kim's musical tastes (and presumably Allen's): the leader of this Irish trip is Kate Campbell, a Nashville-based folk singer. (For details on the trip check it out at: <http://www.katecampbell.com/ireland/>)

And finally I have two items of considerable importance to share with you: one has to do with a needed development of local church ministries for returning veterans and the other is a warning that comes to all of our local churches from The Office of General Counsel for the UCC regarding copyright violations and recent lawsuits that have been emerging.

WOUNDED SOULS

This was a new term for me, one I first learned from the Rev. Peter E. Bauer, UCC Chaplain who in late October gave a presentation at the Atlanta VA Hospital for chaplains and other helping professionals. The theme of his presentation was titled: "Healing the Soul after War."

Then on 1/28/14 (the day of our ice storm in Atlanta) I heard presentations by three different chaplains who were featured at a gathering of denominational executives held at the Episcopal Cathedral of St Philip, Atlanta. Their collective message was similar to that of Peter; in all wars soldiers return with physical, mental, and soul wounds. And the number of soldiers returning with such wounds is going to soon be so high that there is a "train wreck" ahead. The VA health system will not be able to address all of the needs that will unfold in the coming years.

The purpose of the workshop was to make clear how significant this reality is, and to impress upon all twenty five of us (Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish) the role that Faith Groups can play in addressing spiritual wounds and other needs of veterans and their families.

Currently there are 62 "Veteran Friendly Congregations" in Georgia – especially Lutheran, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Catholic, and Baptist. The hope would be that many more would get involved in this movement (including UCC!), and such efforts can be especially effective when done in geographical and ecumenical clusters. Your congregation may only have a few veterans (or none) in active duty, but all of us are likely to know veterans from previous wars, and many of us may have family members with such histories and unfolding needs. If you are interested in learning more, contact the SEC Office where materials are available for deeper understanding and links to contacts for assistance in developing a new mission for your ministry!

COPYRIGHT VIOLATIONS

Following is the note that came to all Conference Ministers regarding this issue:

“Poems, songs, hymns, speeches, and written, visual, or oral works of most any kind, are the intellectual property of their author/creator. They should not be used without express permission.

Despite repeated alerts from the Insurance Board and the Office of the General Counsel, settings of the United Church of Christ continue to post the works of others on web sites, publish it in newsletters, and duplicate it elsewhere. This often triggers claims of copyright violation and demands for statutorily prescribed monetary damages.

The Office of the General Counsel encourages all Conferences to conduct in service trainings for Conference staff, especially those responsible for editing or otherwise managing web sites, to ensure that material originating with others (even material at times attributed to “Anonymous”) is not published or otherwise used without permission.

And here is a report from the Massachusetts Conference Minister, Jim Antal, about this matter:

“We really hit a nerve when we posted the following article about this a few months ago, and I believe opened a lot of eyes in our churches at that time. This article was prompted by one of our churches getting a letter demanding they pay \$2500 for posting a poem. The Insurance Board ended up negotiating a settlement and covering it. <http://macucc.org/blogs/detail/325>

Do check this link ... and do know that Jim Antal has given permission for me to quote him and the news item from the MA –news!

So please help heal wounded souls, and protect yourselves from getting wounded in another manner! And may God bless you for all your ministries in the future.

SHALOM — Randy

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